

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1 and 2 (Cancelled).

Claim 3 (Currently amended): A method for the storage of an acrylonitrile solution of N-phenyl maleimide, which, in a forced coloration test, the values,  $\Delta L$ ,  $\Delta a$ ,  $\Delta b$ , are calculated in accordance with the following formulas:

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta L &= |L_1 - L_2| \text{ (Absolute value)} \\ \Delta a &= |a_1 - a_2| \text{ (Absolute value)} \\ \Delta b &= |b_1 - b_2| \text{ (Absolute value)}\end{aligned}$$

wherein  $L_1$ ,  $a_1$ , and  $b_1$  are respectively the values of  $L$ ,  $a$ , and  $b$  of said acrylonitrile solution before undergoing said forced coloration test and  $L_2$ ,  $a_2$ , and  $b_2$ , are respectively the values of  $L$ ,  $a$ , and  $b$  of said acrylonitrile solution after undergoing said forced coloration test and are respectively 5 or less, 5 or less and 10 or less, wherein a molecular oxygen concentration of the gaseous phase portion of said solution is adjusted to a level in the range of 0.01 to 10% by volume preparatorily to storing said solution as held in contact with a metal, and water content is not more than 0.1% by weight.

Claims 4-7 (Cancelled).

Claim 8 (Previously presented): The method according to claim 3, wherein the acrylonitrile solution comprises from 0.0001 to 1% of at least one primary antioxidant selected from the group consisting of alkyl-substituted hydroxybenzenes and hindered phenols relative to the maleimide and, from 0.0001 to 1% of at least one secondary antioxidant selected from the group consisting of phosphorous esters, phosphoric esters, phosphine, and phosphoric acid amides relative to the maleimide.

Claim 9 (Currently amended): The method according to claim 3, A method for the storage of an acrylonitrile solution of N-phenyl maleimide, which, in a forced coloration test, the values,  $\Delta L$ ,  $\Delta a$ ,  $\Delta b$ , are calculated in accordance with the following formulas:

$$\Delta L = |L_1 - L_2| \text{ (Absolute value)}$$
$$\Delta a = |a_1 - a_2| \text{ (Absolute value)}$$
$$\Delta b = |b_1 - b_2| \text{ (Absolute value)}$$

wherein  $L_1$ ,  $a_1$ , and  $b_1$  are respectively the values of  $L$ ,  $a$ , and  $b$  of said acrylonitrile solution before undergoing said forced coloration test and  $L_2$ ,  $a_2$ , and  $b_2$ , are respectively the values of  $L$ ,  $a$ , and  $b$  of said acrylonitrile solution after undergoing said forced coloration test and are respectively 5 or less, 5 or less and 10 or less, wherein a molecular oxygen concentration of the gaseous phase portion of said solution is adjusted to a level in the range of 0.01 to 10% by volume preparatorily to storing said solution as held in contact with a metal, wherein the acrylonitrile solution has a water content of not more than 0.3% by weight in the presence of at least one member selected from alkyl-substituted hydroxybenzenes, hindered phenols, phosphorous esters, phosphoric esters, and phosphoric acid amides.

Claim 10 (Previously presented): The method according to claim 8, which comprises the steps of:

preparing a maleimide mixture by adding the primary antioxidant and the secondary antioxidant to maleimide in a molten state and, subsequently dissolving said maleimide containing mixture in acrylonitrile.

Claim 11 (Previously presented): The method according to claim 8, comprising:

adding a primary antioxidant and a secondary antioxidant to acrylonitrile and, dissolving molten maleimide therein.

Claim 12 (Currently amended): The method according to claim 3, 9 wherein a total amount of azobenzene and N,N-diphenyl hydrazine is not more than 500 ppm.

Claim 13 (Previously presented): The method according to claim 3, wherein the concentration of N-phenyl maleimide in acrylonitrile is between 40 to 90% by weight relative to that of the acrylonitrile solution of N-phenyl maleimide.

Claim 14 (Previously presented): The method according to claim 3, wherein said gaseous portion comprises molecular oxygen and an inert gas selected from the group consisting of nitrogen, carbon dioxide, helium and argon.

Claim 15 (Previously presented): The method according to claim 14, wherein said inert gas is nitrogen.

Claim 16 (New): The method according to claim 9, wherein the concentration of N-phenyl maleimide in acrylonitrile is between 40 to 90% by weight relative that of the acrylonitrile solution of N-phenyl maleimide.